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Letter dated 15 September 2011 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), as well as to Security Council resolutions 1609 (2005) and 1938 (2010), in which the Council authorized the temporary redeployment of military and police personnel, as appropriate, between UNMIL and UNOCI in order to deal with challenges that cannot be handled within the authorized personnel ceiling of a given mission. I further wish to refer to Security Council resolution 1992 (2011), in which the Council authorized me to extend, until 30 September 2011, the temporary redeployment from UNMIL to UNOCI of three armed helicopters with crew. In the same resolution, the Council also requested me to provide it with an updated analysis and recommendations on inter-mission cooperation arrangements between the two missions, by 15 September 2011. The present letter provides the requested analysis as well as recommendations regarding the support that UNMIL requires from UNOCI, during the upcoming Liberian elections period, within the framework of inter-mission cooperation provided for in resolution 1609 (2005).

As indicated in my previous reports on UNOCI, following the deterioration of the security situation as a result of the post-elections crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, the immediate priority of UNOCI was to reinforce its posture in Abidjan. Consequently, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1967 (2011) and 1975 (2011), the armed helicopters from UNMIL, which arrived in Côte d'Ivoire on 1 March 2011, were utilized primarily in Abidjan until mid-May to provide escorts as well as deterrence and protection of civilians, and United Nations personnel and facilities, in the light of the prevailing hostile environment that had emerged. In particular, the armed helicopters proved to be an invaluable asset in preventing the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population. Thereafter, the primary tasking of the armed helicopters shifted to the western part of Côte d'Ivoire and areas along the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, in view of the emerging challenges in those areas.

In my letter dated 10 June 2011 (S/2011/351 and annex), I elaborated a series of measures agreed upon between UNMIL and UNOCI, which are being implemented in order to enhance security in western Côte d'Ivoire and along the shared border. Among those measures, is the joint tasking of the three armed helicopters, in order to meet the reconnaissance and deterrence requirements of both missions in the border areas, including in support of ground patrols. To enhance coordination and effective surveillance, the 700-kilometre-long border was divided

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into northern, central and southern sectors. The armed helicopters under UNOCI command conducted an average of three air reconnaissance patrols per week, in a two-helicopter formation, in order to maintain visibility and force presence in the border areas.

The patrols on both sides of the border observed, monitored and deterred illegal activities, thereby mitigating, so far, anticipated cross-border incidents and other militia and mercenary activities in western Côte d'Ivoire. As indicated in my aforementioned letter, the two missions have been sharing information gathered during their individual and concurrent patrols, and have also enhanced sharing of information and coordination with national security personnel on their respective sides of the border. This effective surveillance, using a combination of air and ground patrols, has resulted in the reduced cross-border movement of Ivorian militia elements and Liberian elements who participated in the Ivorian conflict.

These measures were also instrumental in shoring up security in inaccessible areas of the border, contributing to intelligence-gathering that led Liberian immigration and police officials in June 2011 to seize an arms cache in River Gee county, including guns, ammunition and rockets, and more weapons in August 2011. An additional benefit was the deepening of the cooperation between the security institutions of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, facilitated by the two missions. In that regard, a series of meetings have been held between the Liberian and Ivorian police, customs and immigration personnel, together with UNMIL and UNOCI.

Despite these ongoing efforts, serious cross-border security and humanitarian challenges remain for both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia as a result of the Ivorian post-elections crisis. In particular, the security and humanitarian challenges created in Liberia by the Ivorian crisis have continued at a time when Liberia is going to hold presidential and legislative elections. This has not only overstretched the still limited capacity of Liberian security institutions but added to the pre-existing risks posed by elections in a country emerging from protracted conflict. In this regard, West African leaders have called on the United Nations to do more to prevent any further reversals of regional security, particularly during the upcoming Liberian electoral period. The Secretariat has therefore worked with UNMIL and UNOCI to develop contingency plans to ensure that UNMIL, in support of the Liberian security agencies, is adequately prepared to respond effectively to any instability that may arise during the election period.

As indicated in my previous reports, although the security situation in Liberia has so far remained generally stable, it is still fragile owing to the continued presence of latent threats that could trigger and escalate violence. While the national referendum conducted on 23 August 2011 was peaceful, the political atmosphere is growing increasingly charged ahead of the elections scheduled for 11 October this year. In recent weeks tension has escalated considerably, with some acts of violence in Monrovia. As this tension is expected to persist during the electoral period, we will continue to encourage the Liberian political stakeholders to resolve disputes peacefully and refrain from incendiary acts or statements. We cannot, however, discount the possibility that prevalent conflict triggers, including ethnic tensions, land and labour disputes, large pockets of unemployed youths, communities hosting large numbers of Ivorian refugees, and the continued presence of an unknown number of both Liberian and Ivorian armed elements, could be exploited to violent ends during this critical election period.

While national institutions bear primary responsibility for conducting and securing the presidential and legislative elections in October 2011, in addition to the possibly numerous run-off elections in November 2011, UNMIL is mandated to support those national authorities, whose already limited capacity has been overstretched by the ongoing response to the security and humanitarian challenges resulting from the Ivorian crisis as well as persistent capability gaps as described in my recent reports to the Council. National security institutions are still dependent on UNMIL for support in responding to security incidents, including public disorder. Prudent planning, therefore, requires the further reinforcement of UNMIL during this critical period.

Geographically, the priority areas of concern during the elections period are Monrovia and its environs, which hosts a third of the Liberian electorate and was the nucleus of violent post-elections protests in 2005, as well as the eastern counties bordering Côte d'Ivoire. Enhancing the visibility, coverage and robust posture of UNMIL in Monrovia during the electoral period is critical to effectively deterring violence and preventing any escalation of incidents.

At the same time, hot spots where violence could be triggered by the factors mentioned above have been identified throughout the country, particularly in the north and east, as well as some major coastal areas, requiring an appropriate security posture to ensure that any incidents that arise can be addressed before escalating. Knowledge of the Liberian context and terrain is critical in that regard, and reinforcement of the security arrangements in the identified areas in the counties will therefore have to come from the existing forces currently based in Monrovia. It is important to note that the Liberia National Police, which is already overstretched by critical capability gaps, will have the responsibility to provide security at the polling stations.

In the light of the above, I recommend that the three armed helicopters currently deployed to UNOCI return to UNMIL by 30 September 2011 in keeping with resolution 1992 (2011), where they will remain focused on the border with Côte d'Ivoire, except during the elections period. Beyond the Liberian presidential and legislative elections, I recommend that, although still based in Liberia, the armed helicopters continue to be used in the border areas in both Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, and also in western Côte d'Ivoire, in the light of the continuing security challenges emanating from these areas, which pose a grave threat to both countries.

It is important to note that the framework for the utilization and joint tasking of the armed helicopters, which was set out in my aforementioned letter of 10 June 2011, remains valid irrespective of whether the helicopters are based in UNMIL or UNOCI. Additionally, I recommend that options be kept open for the possible use of the helicopters to address security challenges in other areas of Côte d'Ivoire, including Abidjan, and for the possible temporary relocation of the helicopters to UNOCI during the anticipated Ivorian legislative elections.

I also recommend that the Security Council authorize the temporary transfer from UNOCI to UNMIL of one infantry company comprising 150 personnel, as well as three formed police unit platoons with supporting elements, totalling 100 personnel, from 1 October to 30 November 2011, to reinforce UNMIL during the elections period. This period of time takes into account the 11 October 2011 election, possible run-off elections in November 2011, and the subsequent announcement of election results. These personnel would be deployed to Monrovia

in order to free up UNMIL military and police personnel familiar with the Liberian terrain for operations in identified priority areas within Monrovia and also, if required, in the leeward counties.

Additionally, I recommend that the Security Council authorize UNOCI to place other military units on standby in Côte d'Ivoire, during the period from 1 October to 30 November 2011, which would be deployed to Liberia only if the situation requires. Those standby forces would include an infantry company comprising 150 personnel, two special forces platoons totalling 80 personnel, and two military utility helicopters. The helicopters would be on standby for only one week during the Liberian elections and one week during the subsequent run-off elections. The actual transfer of these additional troops and assets would take place only after my Special Representative for Liberia advises that the evolving situation requires such further reinforcement of the Mission, upon which I would notify the Security Council.

The Secretariat is in the process of seeking the consent of the concerned troop- and police-contributing countries for these arrangements. In order to ensure the timely redeployment of personnel and assets from UNOCI to UNMIL, I should be grateful if the Security Council would grant advance approval of these proposed arrangements.

I should be most grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon